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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SPEAKER ATTIYA OPTIMISTIC ON KEY
LEGISLATION DESPITE DELAYS

Classified by Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment: In a December 5 meeting with S/I David Satterfield, Deputy COR Speaker Khalid al-Attiya gave a rosy outlook for key legislation in the new year. He said the De-Ba'athification bill and budget were nearing completion, a provincial powers law would reach the COR in early 2008 with substantial consensus among the blocs, and that a provincial election law could follow from it. He also enumerated the COR,s willingness to stay in session following the inevitable delay due to the hajj, a position somewhat undermined by the body,s sudden adjournment and Attiya,s own departure for Egypt the next day. Looking further ahead, Attiya raised the need for a civil service law and a "grand bargain" to achieve national reconciliation. Attiya's assessment of the status of de-Ba'ath reform and the budget law expresses a consensus view we are hearing from all bloc leaders. While a re-drafted provincial powers law could indeed reach the CoR in early 2008, there is still substantial work remaining to bridge differences amongst the key parties on that piece of legislation. End summary.

¶2. (C) Attiya professed optimism on key legislation, observing the Justice and Accountability (De-Ba'thification) law had received two readings and was nearing a vote, and the greatest obstacle to passing the 2008 budget (the Kurdistan Alliance,s objections) had been resolved. He optimistically claimed a Provincial Powers Law will pass early in the new year, followed by an election law three to four months after. According to Attiya, all major blocs except the Sadrists and Fadhila have finished discussion on a law giving provincial governments greater power and will hold a meeting after the hajj to discuss amendments and produce a draft law.

¶3. (C) Attiya lamented the probable delay in passing these laws in spite of such substantive progress, however, because the upcoming hajj likely would preclude the quorum (138 members) required to hold a vote. In a separate meeting the same day with PolCouns, Attiya made strong representation for "continuity," claiming sessions would continue until a break for the Eid holiday, the COR would forego its scheduled two month recess at the end of December, and as necessary remain in session as late as February to pass key legislation (Comment: The following day, Attiya departed mid-session for Cairo, and COR Speaker Mashhadani declared a recess until December 30. End comment).

¶4. (C) If a follow-on election law reaches the COR, Ambassador Satterfield suggested a middle course between open and closed lists as a transition away from the closed list system used in 2005. Attiya agreed, saying eventually even COR elections should move in this direction. Attiya also suggested elections need not take place in all 18 provinces at the same time, if circumstances in some merit a delay. Finally, Satterfield asked if a broader federalism agreement might follow elections. Attiya assented, but doubted new regions would form for at least six months after they are

theoretically allowed in April 2008.

¶5. (C) Attiya said a new civil service law is as important for Iraq as the benchmark legislation. The ministries in his view fill positions through patronage and nepotism, such that only those with political party connections can obtain a government job. A new law could help check corruption and limit spending on salaries. Attiya noted a new code might borrow from that of the former regime, which established effective civil service laws and a council to test and interview applicants before assigning them positions. S/I Satterfield welcomed the idea and encouraged efforts to build consensus on the law.

¶6. (C) In response to a question about prospects for national reconciliation, Attiya called for a grand bargain among all parties, and enumerated three prerequisites for this to happen: Tawafuq must return to the government, sub-state actors must lay down their arms, and some form of general amnesty must take effect. On disarmament, Attiya voiced suspicion of Concerned Local Citizens committees, cautioning that they would only have long-term value if incorporated into official security forces, and suggested bolstering the quality, not the quantity, of current units. Attiya said there was some modest progress toward an amnesty law, saying both Sunni and Shia leaders had agreed on the need to release suspects who had not demonstrably committed a crime.

¶7. (U) Cable drafted after Ambassador Satterfield departed post and not cleared by S/I.
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